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Thesis

THE TREND OF MODERN BIOGRAPHY

Submitted by

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OUTLINE

THE TREND OF MODERN BIOGRAPHY

Introduction:

Body:

INTRODUCTION

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF BIOGRAPHY

There are few things of more universal interest than the study of human nature. The home, the community, the nation, is made up of those individuals who, each in his own way, contribute something vital and permanent to mankind. Heredity and environment play an important part and the individual is observed contending, perhaps, with both of these elements, but more often he is seen struggling with himself--his inherent weaknesses, desires, and ideals. His life stretches out before him in a seemingly endless chain of incidents, exploits, and adventures, while his character and personality develop with his successes and failures. He lives, as it were, two lives--his private life and his public life. To those possessing that very human and very natural characteristic, curiosity, a man's private life is always interesting and a bit fascinating. It can be linked lightly with his own, and, in the contemplation of it, no need of doing anything or no moral impulse is felt. But a man's public life appeals to the egomania which is constantly striving for expression. If that individual has succeeded in accomplishing something--and in every walk of life men and women are accomplishing things--he straightway cherishes the hope of discovering something that will facilitate the transfer of his own powers from latency to actuality. It can be readily seen, then, that man's interest in others is fundamental.

Since the "proper study of mankind is man" himself, there is small wonder that anyone should not find a deep pleasure in reading biography. One hundred and sixty-five years ago, Dr. Johnson decided that fiction gets tiresome, but that biography always interests everybody. Our own Phillips Brooks said that

would rather write a great biography than a great book of any other kind. But let us not overlook the fact that this is the most ancient of the fine arts. "The Iliad and the Odyssey are really biography, and the Hebrew Scriptures are full of biographical portraits. If we could rid ourselves of ecclesiastical and philosophical partisanship, of ethical and socialogical preconceptions and prejudices, we should think of the story of David in the Old Testament and of Jesus in the New as two of the finest and most absorbing pieces of biographical portraiture in the history of literary art." *

However, biography as an art is still in its infancy and its history, though it goes back two thousand years, is still a short one.

Plutarch's Lives is, perhaps, the most noteworthy of these early biographies. Plutarch, a Greek prose writer who spent much time in Rome, treated his heroes in pairs. Greek and Roman was put side by side, such, for example, as Demosthenes and Cicero. His arrangement by topics rather than years is a novel note; and his little personal touches such as Alexander's habit of sleeping with Homer's Iliad and a dagger under his pillow add a humane ring to the book.

The Lives of Saints is religious rather than biographical, and in the emphasis attached to the performing of miracles we lose the sense of reality in the biographies.

In the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth century we find biographies of kings and statesmen, but the second great name is that of an Italian goldsmith, Benvenuto Cellini. In 1558 he began an Autobiography, one of the most brazenly criminal in all literature. Although autobiography is not biography, of course, the two are very closely related, as far as purpose and quality of form and subject are concerned. In recounting the history of this literary

*Abbott, L. F.; "some Biographical Notes"; Outlook, August 24, 1927; p.533

development, it is well, perhaps, to include the most notable writers of autobiography, for the influence exerted by them cannot be overlooked. Cellini's book, a wonderful creation of Italian life in the sixteenth century, was written as if he were describing the doings of someone else. It is a cool chronicle of hatred, of sly amours, of theft, of murders complacently committed, and described in detail. It does not reveal a lovable character, but it does what an autobiography is supposed to do, it presents the personality of the subject.

The next notable figure to unconsciously reveal himself through writing was Samuel Pepys. In his diary, which he wrote in cipher that he might feel free to comment frankly on everybody and everything, he betrays himself as conceited, selfish, given to gossiping, but intensely human. A perfect picture of the court of Charles II is portrayed. It is the Diary's quaint style and unconscious humor, however, that has gained it its popularity.

About a hundred years after Pepys wrote his Diary, the Confessions of Rousseau, a French philosopher and literary artist, appeared. The book is a careful analysis of the author's soul, told with great art, but it lacks the coolness of Cellini's story, and the unintentional humor of Papys'. It reveals extremely unpleasant traits in beautiful language.

At the time of Shakespeare the fashion of writing lives of men of letters had not come into existence. Even then the art of biography could hardly be said to be in its infancy.

But in 1791 probably the best biography ever written appeared. It was Boswell's Life of Johnson. Johnson himself was a good subject for a biography, for he had dramatic personality, ready wit, broad culture, a fine spirit in an uncouth body, and the gift of conversation. Boswell's experience was

development. It is well, perhaps, to include the work quoted without of autobiography, for the influence exerted by that author on a generation. Pollock's book, a contrast in method of thought life in the Victorian country, has still been in its prime. Anecdotes, a letter of anyone else. It is a good criticism of letters, or at least, of the, of matter contemporarily considered, and described in detail. It does not reveal a lovable character, but is a what autobiography is supposed to do, it presents the personality of the subject.

The most notable figure to unconsciously reveal himself through writing was Samuel Pepys. In his diary, which he wrote in cipher, not to be sent abroad free to account freely on everybody and everything, he better discloses the conceited, selfish, given to gossip, the intensely human. A portrait-lover of the court of Charles II is portrayed. It is the diary's quality to be and wonderful matter, however, that we value it the most.

About a hundred years after Pepys wrote his diary, the Journal of Boswell, a friend, biographer and literary critic, appeared. The book is a certain delight of the author's soul, told with great art, with less the coarseness of Pepys's story, and the intellectual level of a type. It proves, either by comparison with the beautiful language.

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But in 1791 certainly the best biography ever written appeared. It was Boswell's life of Johnson. Johnson himself was a good subject for a biography, for he had a lovable personality, strong, lived culture, quite in an unknown way, and the gift of conversation. Boswell's qualifications

such that he knew his subject almost as well as himself. A deep respect for his subject which bordered almost on idolatry, and a passionate desire to relate the truth with all possible accuracy, led Boswell to follow Johnson where ever he went, be he a welcome attachment or not. The faithfulness with which he recorded every detail, portrays Boswell's earnestness of purpose. Considering the fact that Johnson was past forty years of age when his biographer started to collect material, it is inconceivable how many hours the two men must have spent together, Johnson, recollecting past occurrences, Boswell busy over notebook, recording minutely every incident. Not only from Johnson himself, did Boswell glean information, but from every available source. What a vast amount of material he must have had! It took him nearly seven years to select and arrange the material for his book. Add to this Boswell's real literary gifts, his power to pick the essentials from his mass of material, and the power to write simply and clearly, and who can approach him?

Boswell's subject, Dr. Johnson himself, is well known as a biographer of poets. Johnson knew personally Milton, Dryden, Pope, and Gray, and although he incorporated many personal prejudices into his biographies of these men he has given, for the most part, creditable accounts. His life of Milton is, perhaps, the least acceptable, for in Johnson's estimation, to be a Whig was most unpardonable----and Milton was a Whig!

The year 1791 also gave another notable work to the literary world. The autobiography of Benjamin Franklin, the most straightforward and unstudied narrative of its kind, has become an American classic. Its one fault seems to lie in Franklin's lack of feeling for spiritual values, in his practical, material way of looking at everything. His style is simple, with quiet humor here and there; and he is equally honest in discussing his virtues and his

faults.

In 1836 John Lockhart published a biography of his father-in-law, Sir Walter Scott. "Sir Sidney Lee says that this is the best biography in the language, though many feel Trevelyan's Life and Letters of Macaulay ranks second. Both books, however, are excellent portraits of their subject, and with Boswell's Johnson constitute an enduring trilogy." *

In decided contrast with these Victorian writers are the present day writers of biography. Lytton Strachey has revolutionized the art, so to speak, and a new impetus has been given to the writing and reading of this type of literature. On no question of literary ethics has so much been written; on none have the verdicts differed so much. Before attempting to analyze and treat of the existing motives and tendencies of this new type of biography let us consider a moment the aims and objects of real biography.

THE AIM OF BIOGRAPHY

As we look over the biographies in our language we realize that, in every case, it is the personality of the subject--his nature--that has made the book great. It is not the record of his achievements. Through his own writings Dr. Johnson would never have attained to the high place in the estimation of the world that he has reached through his personality. And Boswell has revealed to us that personality. What he has done is to make a man whose personality is interesting and worth knowing, real and memorable.

In order to present a truthful transmission of his subject's personality a biographer must be a man of wide sympathies. He has to present both sides of his subject; therefore he must have a close acquaintance with his hero. Naturally he does not like to admit flaws in his subject, but he should re-

*Hyde, M. A.; "On Biography": Modern Biography, Harcourt, Brace and Company 1926; p. XIV-XIX

member that he is a witness, and that veracity is of primary importance. His efforts should be concentrated on presenting him to posterity as he appeared to his contemporaries, to himself, and to those among whom he lived. He must be unscrupulous in the collection of his material if he wishes to give a full and true picture of his subject. We are told that Boswell would sit at a desk and scribble in his notebook to ensure his not forgetting the conversation; and that he would leave his seat at the dinner-table to make notes. Macaulay somewhat severely describes him as "an unsafe companion who never scrupled to repay the most liberal hospitality by the basest violation of confidence;" but because he was so exacting he became "the first of biographers".

An ideal biographer realizes how momentous is his task. He knows that his book must be a record of fact and not the work of imagination. He knows that it must possess intellectual honesty. He must be objective; he must be able to perceive quickly, to understand readily, to grasp, gather, and evaluage facts, to fuse his material into a homogeneous mass, to stamp it with style, and mix with his literary qualities a certain amount of hero-worship. Self-consciousness has no place in his work; he may efface himself as much as he wishes, and recent biographies have proved that the more he does it, the greater his achievement.*

"Biography," Carlyle writes, "is the most universally profitable, universally pleasant of all things, expecially biography of distinguished individuals." Next to fiction it is the most popular form of literature. And why? Because biography gives us a sense of reality. It is delightful to know as we read that we have before us no Horatio Alger heroes, but real men; and to know that what we read really happened, and is not, like fiction, "a pleasing dream for those that are weary of themselves." To those who are imaginative,

*Collins, J.; "Autobiography"; The Doctor Looks at Biography; Geo. H. Doran Co. 1928; p. 44

more of this pleasure in biography comes from an unconscious projection of self into the lives of interesting people. He who reads freely of biography can never go away from it the same person. He will have lived with enough important lives to have learned a better standard of measurement for the life that lies about him. A book like Charnwood's Abraham Lincoln will add something to his character.

When we consider that we are studying the nature of man as we read his life history, we are satisfying our own curiosity. "How inexpressibly comfortable it is," says Carlyle, "to know our fellow-creature; to see into him, understand him and his goings-on, decipher the whole heart of his mystery: nay, not only to see into him, but even to see out of him, to view the world altogether as he views it;--and do now thoroughly discern both what manner of man he is, and what manner of thing he has got to work on!"* We have a record of mature achievement at the completion of a biography; and if there is nothing in that achievement or in that personality that stirs our imagination or contributes to our mental or spiritual growth, the endeavor to set down a record of a life is wasted effort.

Biography not only gives us a clear-cut picture of mankind, his nature, and achievements, but leads by easy paths to fields whose other approaches are steep and hard. After reading Helaire Belloc's Marie Antoinette is not the French Revolution more vivid and intensely more real? Do you not get a clear conception of English politics after reading André Maurois's Disraeli? And does not English history appear more tangible at the completion of Katherine Anthony's book Queen Elizabeth? In the field of Geography and Science, also, a more significant outlook is achieved. The biographic fact is supplemented by text-book fact and a staying combination is the result. The material of

*Nitchie, E. "Criticism of Literature"; Macmillan Co. 1928; p.257
From Carlyle's "Essay on Biography"

the writer is not, in general, the experience of the writer himself, but of others. He is dealing with facts which he must regard as not merely bits of information, but as part of human experience, with an appeal to the emotions and an influence upon the spirit. Sometimes fact is sacrificed for the purpose of interpretation; particularly so in the last few years. But a real knowledge and insight into other branches of learning is skillfully revealed.

With this brief background let us now direct our attention to the prevailing tendencies, and existing merits and demerits found in the modern biography. Just what is meant by "modern biography"?

BODY

CHARACTERISTICS OF MODERN BIOGRAPHY

One has only to read a page of Plutarch's Lives or a Victorian biographer like Trevelyan or Lockhart, and read after this a page of Lytton Strachey's Eminent Victorians or André Maurois's Ariel to know that truly there is such a thing as modern biography. Here are two distinct types. A book by Trevelyan or Lockhart, is above all things a document; a book by Mr. Strachey is above all things a work of art. Undoubtedly Mr. Strachey is at the same time an exact historian; but he has the power of presenting his material in a perfect art form, and it is this form which is for him the first essential. Gone is the biography of past years which began, "On a Sunday in Dorsetshire a son was born to John and Susan," and proceeded to a minute chronicle of the external facts of the life and relationships of the great man, illuminated occasionally by an inner glimpse through letters. What we are looking for nowadays, be it biography or fiction, is reality, realism, living, pulsing life. The "new" biography, it has been said, is not the creation of modern writers, but of modern readers. It has risen in response to a demand from a suspicious public, a public which believes that in the past it has received pulp instead of fact, bias instead of history, and eulogy instead of biography. And what the new biographers are doing is to select such facts as fit the taste and interest of the public in the present age. The necessity of being truthful about his subject does not prohibit his work at the same time from being colorful, imaginative, and adventurous enough to appeal to varied tastes. There are, it is true, many biographies cluttering the shelves these days that are dishonest attempts compiled from stale records to appease a sensation-hungry

public. No respecters of integrity in others, they delight in disparagement of men whose good works overwhelm their personal faults, and they chuckle with glee whenever they make a hero of some scoundrel of the past. Such books are of no value whatever, and serve to satisfy the intellect of only a few. But the cut-and-dried and unimaginative biography of the past is gone. In its place is a book written with integrity by an honest author, and this, in part, is "modern biography".

Lytton Strachey can be said to be the parent of modern biography. In such a swiftly moving era, he knew that in order for his works to be read, interest had to be the fundamental element; he had to make his subject interesting. Not only did he succeed in making Queen Victoria interesting, he made her live just when she was in danger of becoming a myth. And the Victorians were eminent all right; it is only we who failed to realize their eminence till Strachey came to their rescue. The element for which he strove resulted in his being not merely a biographer, but a master of English prose style. The way he handles his material, the witty, subtle, detached manner in which he writes, the perfectly balanced sentence, the unforgettable "mot juste"---all mark Strachey as a master of his subject. As a man of immense reading, he always selects some gorgeous tid-bit, some colored thread to excite and astonish us.* Furthermore, his objective viewpoint leaves no place for falsity. He portrays his Victorians as they are, and lets actions speak for themselves in the quotations selected from letters and diaries. He says not a word against them, neither does he pen a word against Queen Victoria, but the image is evoked of a fat and resolute little woman, full of pride, accessible to flattery, at the same time touching and ridiculous. Strachey is a deep psychologist, an artist with a passionate love for truty, and a master

*Mais, S. P. B.; "Lytton Strachey"; Some Modern Authors; Grant Richards LTD; London; 1923; p. 196

of irony.* It is this truth in biography that demands individuals, not types. And the skill with which these accumulated truths are treated constitutes interesting, vivid, and vital personalities.

THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH

This search for facts has led to what is sometimes called the new school of interpretative biography. The older biography has consisted of nothing but a portrayal of events through which the subject moved, and the reader was left free to judge the subject's relation to these facts and events, although a flattering relationship was usually suggested. Modern biographies recognize that in biography the person is the center of interest and that only those events need be stressed which have affected his development. In interpretative biography the writer attempts to rid himself of all preconceived notions and traditions that have grown up about his subject and to leave his mind a clear sheet for fresh impressions. Then he steeps himself in all the available material on his hero: letters, diaries, autobiographies, reminiscences, published work, and criticisms. Sometimes he needs to grasp the point of view of an earlier generation. Finally, he seizes upon what he deems is the truest conception of his hero's personality, and proceeds to interpret his real character throughout the pages of his biography. To the author he is an individual, a person with whom he is so familiar that he can tell us what he is, and not, as the older biographies did, give us a part of photographic likeness with external details clear and accurate. The present day biographer looks into his subject's mind, tries to see things as he say them, tries to think as he thought, and tries to obtain a viewpoint that will explain his subject.

This viewpoint is not an easy thing to get. To see everything through

*Paraphrased from Strachey, L.; "Queen Victoria"; Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1921

the hero's eyes, to interpret for his reader and to maintain a proper perspective requires a fine type of mind. That ability to see the man he is writing about as one who has significance to the present demands intrinsic wisdom. The biographer has no easy task before him. He has to follow a set of rules, as exacting as any placed before any other literary craftsman. Not only is he forced to follow an outline, but he must be on his guard continually against the obstructions that may be thrown against him. In this age the temptation to be clever, to produce something spectacular, to enlarge upon some traits in his subject that the sensation-loving public delight in exploring---but which would serve only in giving the wrong conception of the character's true personality, and to endeavor to produce merely a "best-seller", can never take the part of scholarship. And scholarship is, indeed, necessary to a biographer. Not the pedantic scholarship that will quibble over the exactness of a date, or place, or some minor detail, but the scholarship that comes from the deep study of the subject himself, until he is known as well as the biographer knows his brother, and until the age in which he lived is as familiar as the age in which we ourselves are living. It is then that he can assume the character of his hero, and his work will be original and worthwhile. His biography may contribute no correction of past biographical mistakes, it may clear up no cloudy period, but it will give a new portrait of a man and a living individual. And this portrait, provided it is drawn with honesty and from decent motives, will have been achieved from that view-point which is so necessary to real interpretation.

Writing a biography is something like building a house out of old materials that have already been used in building another house. All the necessary pieces are there but the puzzle must be fitted together accurately and with

some plan and order. If some remodelling needsbe done, then the more fascinating and intricate become the building. The selection of pieces and details proves absorbing. And when it is completed both inside and outside is a beautiful symmetry. It takes on character, as it were, and its inhabitants and surroundings lend it individuality. The biographer, as the builder, must content himself with the materials at hand, and confine himself with circumstances which are known, or reasonably guessed, to have been actual. But he, as the builder, can infuse a certain element in his product that will enhance the effect and not detract from its essential value. The selection of the necessary details, then, becomes his problem.

Just as an artist selects details in order to give the right emphasis to true characteristics, so a good biographer must practice selection. The artist steps back from his easel and views his model impartially; at that moment he is a spectator observing. But as he works day after day he becomes familiar with little traits, expressions, and movements, and finally he has caught on his canvass the model's personality. He paints it truly for he was neither hero-worshipper nor detractor. However, he was a man of vision, for he saw the significance of the material before him. A good biographer sees the significance in his selected material and immediately employs it in character or age delineation. Moreover, in the selection of details he exercises breadth and depth of judgment.

A biographer whose mind is free from preconceived notions and lust for propaganda can be sincere. The sympathetic and kind-hearted objectivity that made Boswell's <u>Johnson</u> the greatest biography in English literature showed sincerity and judgment. No one can deny that for Boswell Dr. Johnson was an ideal, and yet he let no hero-worship divert him from the rigid path of truth

in every instance. His sense of fitness, and choice of details was remarkable. Boswell not only knew his Johnson, he knew human nature.

In the interpretation of personality and in the selection of details truth should be of paramount importance. This spirit of truth must so motivate the entire work that there can be no cause for criticism. Truth has ever been the essence of pure and lofty thought, and considering the many and diverse fields into which the search for this divine principle has taken man, the wisdom gleaned is much more satisfying than countless other things. It is truth alone that liberates the mind and gives it that breadth and depth of judgment that springs from real knowledge.

But how inexpressibly important it is that those truths should be used with foresight and rectitude! At times it is not good to tell the whole truth about a subject. Very often we know some cruel story about a living friend which we are very careful not to repeat. Why should we show less loyalty toward our dead friends, and toward great men? Of course they are not perfect--who is?--and of course there might have been a legendary element in the superfine portrait that had been painted of them. But was not this legend a source of inspiration? It served as an example to men and raised them above their own level.

Sometimes it pleases us to learn that men of eminence had foibles and frailties not unlike our own. It seems to make our own infirmities weigh less heavily. And we like to compare ourselves with the brave, illustrious, and endowed. Consequently, biography serves to pander to our vanity. We reflect that under different circumstances we would have done more and better. But we become even more self-satisfied--and this should not be one of the reactions of real biography--when we learn of a story that degrades our hero. This icon-

in every instance. In cases of [illegible], one copies of [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible] not only [illegible] [illegible].

In the interpretation of personality [illegible] the evaluation of [illegible] [illegible] around [illegible] or permanent impressions. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the quality [illegible] that there [illegible] [illegible] for criticism. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] been the [illegible] of [illegible] and [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] and divorce [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

oclastic tendency in many of the present day biographies is one of the most harmful and destructive elements. We will consider this point later.

To be detached and objective, and at the same time sympathetic, understanding, and introspective requires unusual capability. One would be hard put to it to describe even his own life--and at the same time be truthful. For life is a confused medley of actions, thoughts, and feelings, very often contradictory, yet possessing a certain unity and tone. Jane Carlyle said, "If I might write my own biography from beginning to end, without reservation or false coloring, it would be an invaluable document for my country women in more than one particular. But 'Decency forbids'!"* Life is made up of many things which are just as well left untold. There are certainly particulars in our own lives that need not be exposed; why expose them in others? Dr. Johnson one said, "The value of every story depends on its being true. A story is a picture either of an individual, or of human nature in general; if it be false, it is a picture of nothing." Of course there are many cases in which it is painful to tell the truth. Then the solution is simple. The life must not be written. If it is written, it must be truly written. But a biography, to be truthful in its character portrayal, should show discretion in its selection of details.

Many biographies of the past were but a collection of dates and movements strung together, chapter after chapter, sordid and pedantic, and having no other ultimate value than that of a source-book. They lacked what is the first essential to biography today--imaginative insight. They were concise and precise in their presentation of dates, but they threw fact after fact and left them, never thinking of taking these facts and shining them up, and rubbing out a few unimportant dates for the purpose of making a picture that is not

*Maurois, A.; "Aspects of Biography"; D. Appleton & Co. 1929, p. 166

only true but exciting. Because a book deals with true facts it does not mean it has to be dull. Dullness in a book certainly is not stimulating. "Sir Sidney's Life of Shakespeare is dull and his Life of Edward VII is unreadable simply because they are literally stuffed with truth. His error lay in his failure to choose those truths which transmit personality. For, in order that the light of personality may shine through, facts must be manipulated; some must be brightened; others shaded; yet, in the process, they must never lose their integrity. Truth is efficacious and supreme, yet it should be used with care and discrimination."*

Today a biographer takes an individual man as a central figure, and makes the events of a period begin and end and revolve around him. Ludwig, one of our most foremost biographers of the day, insists that the art of portraying human character cannot be achieved by merely studying historical documents,--that it must be learned by the study of living men and women. Ludwig perceives the portrait as a whole, and then seizes upon incidents and details that will heighten his effects. The incidents in some cases may be apocryphal rather than authentic, but in hardly an instance do they detract markedly from the essential value of the portrait.

A good biography, moreover, does paint the picture of the times in which the subject lived. Sandbury's Life of Lincoln has at least this one claim to being called a good biography, for he writes not merely an account of the prairie years of Abraham Lincoln, but an interpretation of that pioneer spirit of which Lincoln was so remarkable an illustration, and which has played so large a part in American life.

Let us consider for a moment Henry Hackett's Henry the Eighth. An epoch of history is studied in reading this biography, yet Henry, himself, stands

*Maurois, A.; "Aspects of Biography"; D. Appleton & Co. 1929.; p. 37

out so clearly and definitely in our minds that we have a distinct individual, and not merely one of England's kings. Hackett recognizes the fact that Henry was a man before he was a king and that is what makes his book so readable. He uses his facts in such a way as to present Henry to his readers as a complex personality, a full-blooded, bull-headed dynast, keen enough to know what he wanted, inconsistent, but rational enough to justify almost every wicked thing he ever did, and adept in that art which consists in believing implicitly your own fabrications, on the principle that even if it is not true, it ought to be. Hackett surely is convincing! And not only has he made Henry vital, but he has written brilliant studies of the steadfast, eternally Spanish Catherine; the black-eyed Anne Baleyn in her battlemented dress; gentle Jane Seymour; the great-brained Cardinal Wolsey; the cold-steel Cromwell; Sir Thomas More, yielding to worldliness until life seemed too high a price to pay for denial of ideals; old Fisher, accepting death with honesty; ful-blooded, life-loving, intensely selfish, vain men and women sparkling with wickedness, or serenity, or simple humanity.* And in dealing with so many historical facts and personalities has he produced a dull book? Not by any means. History and biography mingle and a clear-cut portrait is perceived not only of a vast number of individuals but of the time in which they lived. There were so many historical facts involved in Henry's life that truth had to be uppermost. Mr. Hackett's problem was to select those essential facts which best portrayed the real Henry and interpreted his character. But his first duty after collecting his facts was to lay hold of the truest conception of Henry's personality. We were interested in what he was, not what he looked like.

Real biography tries to explain a man, to let us know how he impressed the people who knew him. Cellini lives, and Boswell's Johnson lives, because they

*Paraphrased: Hackett, F.; "Henry the Eighth"; H. Liveright, 1929

are real people. We feel their humanity in the twentieth century as distinctly as it was felt in their own time. The method used in accomplishing this purpose is the same as it was in Plutarch's time, as it will be a thousand years hence. If we are to feel that we know a person, we must see him in action, we must feel the effect of the events of his life as if they were happening to us. The best biographies are always concrete. Plutarch shows us the great Brutus sitting beside a brook at twilight after his last battle, and repeating poetry as he gazed up at the stars. Amy Lowell describes the homesick little boy Keats fighting his brother's battles in the school yard. In such a way does biography endeavor to explain, to interpret, and to recreate the individual and the period in which he lived.

THE INVASION OF THE SPHERE OF PSYCHOLOGY

The success that has attended the efforts to guess the secrets of the world--the progress of science--is responsible for some of the improvement in biography. Psychology, that comparatively new and interesting branch of science, seeks not only to interpret the biographical figure more adequately and fully, but seeks to analyze the subject. By analyzing the qualities that make up the character of the subject, the reader comes to know the subject as he comes to know a person whom he meets in his daily life. This method is used widely among present day biographers.

Among the psychological school of biographers the unquestioned leader is Lytton Strachey. In Elizabeth and Essex he has developed in his own mind a psychological character for his heroine, and makes his selection of facts fit into that character. What we get is Strachey's reaction to the sitter. When, in four pages, he records the thoughts that pass through Elizabeth's mind, we

are getting, of course, pure fiction.* But, at least there is reasonable psychological exposition that would seem to vindicate the convictions arrived at. We admit that such re-creating of thoughts is not truth.

That Caesar crossed the Rubicon is a fact, but the greatest psychologist living, possessing what no biographer can possess--complete knowledge of the "science",--could not, with scientific accuracy, reconstruct Caesar's thoughts before he decided to return to Rome.

For practitioners of this school of psychological biography, it is far easier to imagine what a person may have thought than to weave the facts of what he did into a readable and salable narrative. An extract from Strachey's Queen Victoria will show how biography is improved by making use of this mode of character interpretation:

"Perhaps her fading mind called up once more the shadows of the past to float before it, and retraced, for the last time, the vanished visions of that long history--passing back and back through the cloud of years, to older and older memories--to the spring woods at Osborne, so full of primroses for Lord Beaconsfield--to Lord Palmerston's queer clothes and high demeanor, and Albert's face under the green lamp, and Albert's first stage at Balmoral, and Albert in his blue and silver uniform, the Baron coming in through the doorway, and Lord M. dreaming at Windsor with the rooks cawing in the elm trees, and the Archbishop of Canterbury on his knees in the dawn, and the old king's turkey--cock ejaculations, and Uncle Leopold's soft voice at Claremont, and Lehzen with the globes, and her mother's feathers sweeping down upon her, and a great old repeater-watch of her father's in its tortoise-shell case, and a yellow rug, and some friendly flounces of sprigged muslin, and the trees and the grass at Kensington."**

*Adams, J. T. "Lytton Strachey"; New Modes on Biography; Current History, November, 1929; p.260
**Strachey: "Queen Victoria;" Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1921 p. 423-4

If the Queen's thoughts were not these as she lay dying--what were they? Strachey had grasped the Queen's personality, had endeavored to analyze her character in such a manner that he could almost lay his finger on her innermost thoughts and emotion.

André Maurois, another of our foremost present day biographers, is likewise a psychologist. He subtitles his Ariel, a Shelley Romance, and therefore does not mislead the public in a belief that they are getting a real biography of Shelley scientifically treated. He analyzes not only Shelley and his wife but gives us an impression of knowledge of human nature. For example:

"Poor dear Shelley!" said they, as soon as the couple had left them. "He certainly has not got the wife he ought to have."*

This is an impression very general amongst young women who see the man they would have liked themselves in the possession of another. No doubt these words were never actually said, but they certainly must have been in the minds of those who ventured to attack Harriet, in her absence, with tiny pin-pricks; they guessed intuitively those criticisms to which her doctrinaire husband would be most sensitive.

Another instance shows Maurois psychoanalyzing:

"Basking in the splendid Italian sunshine they thought with longing of Windsor, of Marlow, even of London. What was the use of all these mountains, of all this blue sky without any friends? Social enjoyment, in some form or another, is the Alpha and Omega of existence, and, no matter how real or how beautiful the actual landscape may be, it vanishes into smoke in the mind when one thinks of some familiar forms of scenery, commonplace perhaps in themselves, but over which old memories throw a delightful hue."**

In this creation there is beauty and art, and what is more, it does not

*Maurois, A.; "Ariel"; D. Appleton Co., 1928; p. 142
**Maurois, A.; "Ariel"; D. Appleton Co., 1928; p. 245

detract from the essential truth of the subject-matter. A more conclusive picture of the subject is gained, and a deeper knowledge and understanding of how and why he accomplished or tried to accomplish certain things, together with the inherent nature of the subject himself is attained.

Katherine Anthony, in her biography Queen Elizabeth, has attempted the same manner of presentation. No one in all history has suffered so much from propaganda as this misrepresented queen. To conceive her as warm-blooded and human, with like passions to ourselves, with aches and pains, hopes and disappointments, sorrows, triumphs, follies, memories--in short, the kind of being we can understand--requires a vast amount of character analysis. Miss Anthony, after a great amount of research, has laid hold of what she considers the essentials in Elizabeth's character and experience. The scandals which were first told by enemies of the queen, she has traced to their sources and rates them unimportant in the face of the Queen's character. Queen Elizabeth herself had a psychology of her own which was as modern as any twentieth century theory. Miss Anthony has analyzed this complicated personality with exceeding clearness. She has done this by a gradual exposition developing through a long series of events.

With the recent stress on relation of cause and effect, and shift of interest from external manifestations of character to internal analysis, the tendency to feel that chronological arrangement is better is in evidence. It gives opportunity to study the influence of heredity and environment in the development of character. Mrs. Amabel Williams-Ellis has worked in this manner in her The Exquisite Tragedy, the intimate life of John Ruskin. She has endeavored to present a life-history coupled with the psychological problems which it presents. She outlines carefully his life, showing the effect of a

domineering parentage, the effect of his marriage, his environment, his travels, and education. What does escape her, however, is the beauty in Ruskin's soul; it is Ruskin's philosophy of life that we esteem most highly. But this biographer has shown us Ruskin as part person, part a mere collection of discontinuous psychological elements. Ruskin, himself, was not responsible. His mastery of the English language, the reformation in art which he effected, was due, no doubt, to the fact that he existed in the realm of the esthetic; and his pretentiousness with which he is often credited, was due to his up-bringing and environment. We obtain a good picture of "the only child of a domineering woman--tenderly loved by her, and petted, ruled, disciplined, and spoiled by her, and loved and petted by his father--his moral sense early and morbidly over-developed as he grew up by the devotion of father, mother, and friends. For years after most men areforced to match themselves with the real world, he was living in a world of his own."*

The Exquisite Tragedy depicts Ruskin as a man and a misfit, frustrated and disappointed. It is my opinion, though, that if one truly wishes to know Ruskin, he should read his works and not this biography. The beauty in the man lies not in his life history. The point I am making, though, is that Mrs. Williams-Ellis has exposed a personality through a series of events.

Of course, there is a grave danger in this presentation. Oftentimes the biographer is blind to the fact that whatever influence certain factors as traits may have had, he cannot explain thereby the whole of his subject and his career. O'Higgins explains Mark Hanna by a clash between an impurity complex and a biological urge to secure the esteem of his fellows.** This is mereguesswork. Little is known of these things scientifically, much less of people long dead. One of the leading psychiatrists in the United States was

*Paraphrased from Williams-Ellis, A.; "The Exquisite Tragedy," Doubleday Doran Co., 1929

**Adams, J. T.; "New Modes in Biography"; Current History; November, 1929; p. 261

appealed to by the author of one of the finest biographies ever published in America. He sent two chapters to the doctor for criticism, in which the author had attempted to prove that at one time his subject was suffering from a certain mental disorder. The psychiatrist told him that even with the living subject before a specialist for personal examination, it was no easy task to diagnose; that in the case of a person who could not be personally examined it was utterly impossible. The chapters were omitted, but had they been included, the public would have hailed the book as a "scientific biography" of the "new school".*

Human nature is so complex a thing that it will be long before science will permit us to predict or trace human conduct conclusively and exactly.

In analyzing the mind of his subject the biographer has a severe task confronting him. To be subjective he is obliged to reason excellently, examine minutely, and consider growth, derogations, and achievement. This matter of achievement, as well as character and physical events, should not be overlooked. If lack of accuracy in the recording of events tends to make a romance, if lack of character study makes a record of a name in Who's Who, it is also true that absence of any estimate of achievement makes a narrative--and not a biography. Maurois has been criticized in regard to this point. He has given an excellent account of the man Shelley but no biography of the poet, for he disregards his poetry almost entirely. Both external events and personal accomplishment unite to make the man.

To return to the matter of subjectivity we have an example of this in John Charpentier's Coleridge. Anyone who has read The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, Christabel, and Kubla Khan, knows that Coleridge's mind was not a simple one; and there were mystical elements in it that require the most

*Adams, J. T.; "New Modes in Biography"; Current History, November, 1929, p. 261

appealed to by the author of one of the finest literary [illegible] in [illegible]. My most [illegible] to his book's [illegible] is [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

sensitive psychological insight and laborious analysis. This man cannot be dismissed as a rather abnormal fellow with thwarted religious leanings who took to drugs, saw visions in his trances, and so created his poems. He was one of the founders of the romantic movement in English poetry during the early nineteenth century. It is impossible to enumerate all the instances and influences that molded his inspiration, but it is evident that the age in which he lived affected him and his productions. Charpentier has considered all these factors when he has conceived a study that is as much criticism as it is biography, and as much psychological analysis as it is criticism. His choice of subject could not have been more appropriate for the illustration of this point.

Ludwig is another biographer who probes and discovers human motives. At the University he produced a thesis on "Emotional Murder"; certainly he has delved deep enough into psychology. His character study of William II is penetrating, psychological, analytical, and illustrated by striking instances of the Emperor's dominant traits, his arrogance, vanity, Caesarism, instability, charm, and personality.

We are all psychologists in a senseand perhaps this is why we appreciate such view points.

The Victorian biographers produced merely factual books. The subjects were decked out in their best raiment; there were facts and documents and letters; precision and good manners were predominant. The result was a series of stuffed figures that seemed quite removed from actual life.

Today our biographers analyze; they probe the profundities and sound the mind of their individuals. Mr. Arvin, for instance, in Hawthorne, has recreated a mind that he had analyzed from the subject's own work. Hawthorne's

sensitive personalities, lack and intellectual training. Our environment is
dominated by a modern atomic relic with material religious longings and
tools to serve, are whirling in the universe, and to provide the power. The
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[illegible] power today.

It is impossible to separate the influence and
[illegible] the [illegible], and it is evident that the age in
which we lived strongly affected and [illegible]. Therefore one cannot
[illegible] factors when [illegible] a [illegible] is so much criticism as
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characters grew out of his subconsciousness and a study of them illuminates Hawthorne's own disastrous struggle to adjust himself to his environment. Mr. Arvin's book might almost be termed a "mental biography". And again, Mr. Browne, in That Man Heine has acquainted himself with the theories of his subject to such an extent that he, too, has brought us a living character. Rosamone Longbridge has gone so far as to subtitle her book on Charlotte Brontë A Psychological Study. She endeavors to point out that the whole secret of Charlotte Brontë's miseries, her sickness of mind, her sickness of body, the sickness of her fate, is that she is suffering from suppressed personality. And personality, so Miss Longbridge believes, is composed of likes and dislikes, whims, fancies, and indulgences. In Charlotte Brontë all these likes and dislikes existed in unusually abundant and individual measure, but had been given no chance of expression. Thus, our modern biographers, by such psychoanalysis, purport to throw the personality of the character into stronger relief.

BIOGRAPHY AS A WORK OF ART

There was a time when fiction and biography were one. "Beawulf" and "King Arthur" were, in truth, romantic biographies. Much of our oldest literature was life-history. These pieces still retain their elemental qualities and beauty and we read with zest the experiences of these heroes. Delicately suggested is the character interpretation in these biographic narratives. We have a vivid picture of Arthur,--if there really was such a person,--of his personality as well as his exploits. And the interest in this old English knight appealed to generations simply because he was, in their minds, a real character. Though he be but a myth, his life story always

stirred his listeners. Romance and biography combined to make Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table a work of literary merit.

Biography and fiction, however, parted because the factual sort that was used for reference allowed no narrative form. Not so much, perhaps, was it used for reference as it was for moral instruction. Carlyle took a fancy to biography but he left out all political, social, and economic aspects, as he thought the moral was much more to be forced. The older biographers did believe in moral, and since three-fourths of the life of man is conduct, and conduct is moral, we find no artistic background or setting in biographies produced by such writers. The purpose of this moral instruction is plain. Great men were weighed on a scale as the test of the author; the scale was an idealistic one of his own which weighed human greatness.

The oldest biography was seldom written as merely biography, for the oldest attitude was not that of knoledge but that of inspiration. Plutarch wrote his Lives, no doubt, from this standpoint. The author's purpose was not only to convey with accuracy the facts abouta hero, but to convey facts of life, and to show what life may be or may not be, and to form, if possible, moral instruction. Life was seen as a whole and as a parable. The facts of life were sifted and out of it came a moral. Until recently the popular mind always tended to view life and history parabolically. Richard the Lion-Hearted, Richard III, George Washington, and Abraham Lincoln were all mythicized. The eighteenth century biography of Washington stated his story in such a manner as to be of moral guidance. Little attempt was made to find out if certain episodes were true until recently, when modern minds seized upon the idea.

It was this attitude that Emerson and Carlyle adopted. They saw no significance in man unless it was moral. But both these men were idealists. In

[illegible] his [illegible]. Romance and biography continued to serve [illegible] and his mighty of the world only a form of literary work.

Biography and fiction, however, served men as the earliest [illegible] used for reference allowed no deviating form. Not so much, perhaps, was it used for reference as it was for moral instruction. Early in the [illegible] biography was to hold out all [illegible], social, and economic aspects, so we thought the worldly man more to be [illegible]. The other biographers did their work, and [illegible] of the life of men in conduct, and conduct in moral, we find no artistic background or setting in biography as [illegible] in some writers. The purpose of this moral instruction is plain. Great men were held up as a [illegible] of the best in the author; the scene was an [illegible] one of his own which [illegible] those [illegible].

The classic biography was seldom written as moral biography, for the object at times was not that of knowledge but that of inspiration. Plutarch wrote his *Lives*, no doubt, from this standpoint. The author's purpose was not only to convey [illegible] but to convey facts of life, and to show what life may be or may not be, and to form, if possible, moral instruction. Life was seen as a whole and as a [illegible]. The facts of life were sifted and out of it came a moral. Until recently the popular mind always tended to view life and history per [illegible]. Richard the Lion-Hearted, Richard III, George Washington, and Abraham Lincoln were all symbolic. The eighteenth century biography of Washington stated his story in such a manner as to be of moral guidance. Little attempt was made to find out if certain episodes were true until recently, when modern minds seized upon the idea.

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the eighteenth century moral interpretation held full sway and man was judged by his ethical value. Not long after the death of Washington three biographies appeared. One was written by James Marshall, an American jurist; another, by Washington Irving, the greatest literary man of his age; and another by Jared Sparks, a collector of source material. All were honest biographies by men who sought to tell the truth. Yet now, not one is read by the public because they too deeply reverenced Washington, and showed too much interest in the public side of his life and character. Their Washington seemed too monotonously good to be true.

It can be well imagined that these moralistic biographies were dull, drab, colorless, evolved products that were difficult to read and that held no incentive for further exploitation in the field. To be artistic, to be life-like, to be interesting, a character whether real or fictional, has to actually move against certain political, social, and economic curtains.

Today biography and fiction have again united in a narrative form. The biography is borrowing the thunder of the novel but to seemingly good purpose, since it justifies itself in the eyes of worthwhile commentators, and since so many biographies in the new manner are commanding and are worthy to command our attention. It is obvious, too, that biography should have a definite relationship to fiction, for the purpose of biography is to make a character live for its readers. If the narrative method is used, how much more effectively the result may be accomplished!

Maurois even suggests that a biographer may be a novelist. In "Ariel" surely, his aim was that of a novelist. "Endeavor," he writes, "has been made to arrange these genuine elements in such a way as to produce the impression of progressive discovery and natural development characteristic of the novel."*

*Maurois, A.; "Aspects of Biography"; D. Appleton and Company, 1929; p. 59 (paraphrased)

the [illegible] society novel interpretation that I'll away and can be [illegible] by its ethical value. Not long after the death of Washington Irve Bierce, [illegible] appeared. One can written in Jerry Kermit, an American [illegible] author, by Washington Irving, the greatest literary son of his age; and another [illegible] Sparks, a collector of source material. All were honest interpretation [illegible] enough to tell the truth. Yet now, not one is read by the public because they are highly [illegible] and stored for [illegible] interest in the public at [illegible] of his life and character. Scott Fitzgerald seemed too autobiographic [illegible] to be true.

It can be well imagined that [illegible] particular [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

If the influence of events and people on the hero's character is not shown progressively and as they appeared to him, it is difficult to make biography a work of art. The novel as well as poetry is artistic; and since we are concerned with the biographic novel, we are likewise concerned with it as an artistic product. It most assuredly would not be artistic taste if, for example, "in a biography of Byron, a portrait of Shelley was presented as he was before the moment when Byron first knew him. It is desirable that the portrait should be as close as possible to what Shelley was in Byron's eyes at that moment."* To be able to make such a presentation is art. The characters in a biography, since they have actually existed, are not so well adapted as those of a novel to such situations.

The fact that biography is now being written in the form of fiction--and what has ever been more universally read than fiction?--has increased not only readers of biography but writers as well. This sudden increase in the supply of biographies was instigated by the immense sales of Strachey's Eminent Victorians and Queen Victoria. Maurois's Ariel proved the popularity of the new method of turning out biographies. From 1900-1915 somewhat over five hundred biographies a year were published in England. Last year there were 4,000 volumes published. The average output of England, America, France, and Germany were one-half dozen volumes per day. Are all these biographies of value? It is difficult to determine just what permanent additions to literature in this branch have been made during the past two years, for good literature stands the test of time. Certainly some were important, some amusing, and some unique as revelations of human types and conditions. However, biography itself, has been enriched during these past two years, and has revealed many interesting varieties of international character. As a difficult

*Maurois, A. "Aspects of Biography"; p. 59

If the importance of events and problems in the book's character is not known immediately and as they appeared to him, it is difficult to make biography a work of art. The novel as well as history is an action and since we are concerned with the biographic novel, we are likewise concerned with it as an artistic product. It most assuredly would not be artistic unless it, for example, in a biography of Byron, a portrait of Shelley was presented as he was before the meeting when Byron first saw him. It is desirable that the portrait should be as close as possible to what Shelley was in actuality over at that moment. To be able to make such a presentation is art. The characters in a biography, since they have actually existed, are not to be all adapted as those of a novel to a pre-plotted.

The case that biography is not being written in the form of fiction--and what has ever been more universally read than fiction--has increased not only readers of biography but writers as well. This auction increase in the supply of biographies was initiated by the immense sales of Strachey's Eminent Victorians and Queen Victoria. Strachey's novel proved the popularity of the new method of writing and thereafter as. From 1920-1930 somewhat over five hundred biographies also a year were published in England. Last year there were 6,000 volumes published. The average sales of a of England, America, and Germany were one-half million volumes per day. In all these countries of value? It is difficult to determine just what prominent novelists to biographers in this tension have been made during the past two years. For good literature thinks the best of them. Curiosity was a factor, some reading and some buying as revelations of human types and conditions. However, biography itself, when been modified during these past two years, and has revealed many interesting varieties of intermediate characters. As a distinct channel, A. "Lives of Biography"; ...

combination of science and art it has progressed far, and in most of the books some practical knowledge is set forth.

This new school has almost compelled the world to read biography. Perhaps the reading of biography at present is a fad, but it has been stimulated by the method in which it is being written. Because the public is interested in biography as well as in fiction, very large prizes have been offered. Francis Hackett's Henry the Eighth was the choice of last year and carried with it a monetary reward. It was most outstanding, it is true, and certainly showed remarkable skill in the handling of the huge amount of material. Not only that, it possessed style. Henry was forever in the foreground, behind him standing Cromwell, Wolsey, and Cranmer. Perhaps, according to history, these three figures were greater, but Hackett was portraying Henry, and by fictional imagination he accomplished this feat without dissolution of fact.

The interest in biography is as deep as interest in life itself. There is joyousness, sunshine, romance, tragedy, sorrow, and contentment all in a span of years. We realize dimly what will eventually happen, for life is nothing but an extended epitaph. "The moving finger writes, and having writ, moves on." It is all so fascinating and uncertain! The unexpectancy and presumption! "The romantic interest of a life springs from just that anticipation of the future, from that finding of ourselves on the brink of the abyss which is To-morrow, without any conception of what we shall find there. So it is with biography. Even when the man is famous and the reader knows perfectly well that the hero is destined to become a great general or a great poet in the end, half the joy is taken from the reading if, in the first sentence of the book the reader is informed of the fact. Why begin a biography as Forster begins that of Dickens? 'Charles Dickens, the most popular novelist of this

country and one of the greatest humorists which England has produced, was born at Portsea on Friday, February 7, 1812.' It seems rather absurd to treat such a fascinating subject in this wise."* The author of a tragedy does not suggest to us, in his first lines, what the denouement is to be. The author of a biography realizes, of course, that the reader knows the denouement; but it is not for him to advertise it on the first page. Life is not like that. He should begin simply, with no desire to shine, or extol himself, but with the one object of placing his reader in an atmosphere which will facilitate his understanding of the first feelings of the hero in his youth. It is then that that printed character begins to live, begins to think, begins to mature, and we are conscious of that humanism which dominates the best biographies.**

It is this humanistic element in the biographies of today that tends to make them a piece of literature. The author's purpose seems not to convey with explicit accuracy the facts of the hero as much as it seems to convey the personal phases of his life, to show what sort of a man with whom he is dealing, and to place him in certain lights that will tend to reflect his character and personality. A wide research in the attempt to learn the facts is, of course, necessary. When a biographer, in picking out the essential qualities in the whole subject which he is contemplating, chooses without weakening the whole, he is very precisely performing the artist's function. For example, Strachey's imitations of Queen Victoria's mannerisms, of her underlining all the words of a phrase, of her writing "Lord M--" instead of "Lord Melbourne," "Dear Albert" instead of "Prince Albert,"--all these little details produce a very natural and human picture. Such writers realize the importance of these artistic changes. They are artists painting with scrupulous delicacy.

Perhaps the curiosity of learning about people as they really were is the

*Maurois, A.; "Aspects of Biography"; D. Appleton & Co., 1929; p. 57
**Paraphrased from Maurois, A.; "Aspects of Biography"; p. 58

[illegible]

[illegible]

natural result of the modern absorption of psychology. It is a form of culture, too, if it does not tend to become allied with gossip--a very natural and dangerous outcome; for, with it comes an increased understanding of human nature. Generally, a novel does not get beyond our head to our heart; but it has to get to the heart if it is to be of any permanent value. With a knowledge of psychology a writer knows how to reach the heart-strings of his readers, and to enrich his impressions. Someone has said that the great idea of education is not so much the right ideas, but the right feelings; for "it is the great truisms of life that move men, not ideas," so sayeth the poet.

Thus it is that a biography characterized by immense learning is insufficient. It will not last because it does not reach the heart. Of course, whether a book will or will not be a permanent acquisition, one cannot prognosticate; but if analytical interpretation is not utilized, the type of ingenuity employed will amount merely to a complete rationalization that leaves out the more important elements.

The relation between the biography and the novel is extremely close. Clarissa and Tom Jones, our first English novels, were biographic. An old biography was taken and a story with an imaginary character crystalized. Today we come to know the poet Byron, in the novel, Glorious Apollo; and Shelley in Ariel; and Burns in The Immortal Lover; and Dickens in This Side Idolatry. The purpose of all these was to obtain novelistic interest. Fear, the biography of James Edwards, written by a psychiatrist, Professor Oliver, is a most remarkable bit of fictionized and scientific biography.

It will be noticed that even in the titles of these books the narrative elements holds. An author always selects a title for his novel that will attract attention. "The Life of-----" has always been a dry and dull sort of

appellation. But as we glance over the biographical shelves today such titles as these meet the eye: That man Heine, Elizabeth and Essex, The Laughing Queen, The Exquisite Tragedy, Don Juan, The Life and Strange and Surprising Adventures of Daniel DeFoe, Unafraid, Emerson, the Wisest American, etc. Many have sub-titles, such as, Disraeli, A Picture of the Victorian Age; Ariel, A Shelley Romance; Byron, The Last Journey; Columbus, Don Quixote of the Seas; etc.

Not only have titles undergone a transformation but a new emphasis has been placed on design. Ludwig divides his Kaiser Wilhelm II into three parts--Accession--Power--"Expiation." Goethe is written in three volumes, as three acts of a play. Before he wrote his Napoleon he had written a drama in verse on his hero. Ludwig's work is essentially dramatic. In Cyrano we find three divisions--Swordsman--Libertine--Man-of-Letters. In Emerson, The Wisest American, there are three divisions--Doubting Youth--Manhood and Mastery--Silver Years. In The Exquisite Tragedy, there are four divisions.

From this it is observed that the new biography presents life in chronicles with a due sense of design as an organic unity in which each episode and incident is an essential contribution to the whole. When Disraeli was asked what was the most desirable life, he replied, "A splendid and continuous procession from youth to the grave." The new biography tries to present life as a procession consciously organized, always continuous. Each life must have its hidden unity; the problem is to find it. "Shelley's life, for instance, presents a wonderful natural composition. It is grouped around two women, Harriet and afterwards Mary Godwin. Each of these women corresponds with a different stage in Shelley's ethical development, and he is drawn to each by feelings which bear a fairly close resemblance to each other. The

catastrophe which ends his life occurs in early youth, before the point at which the crowded and varied events of a ripe age can rob his personality of its admirable simplicity. Such a life as this presents manifold opportunities to an author. But Byron is a much more difficult hero; a novelist would have been hard put to it to construct a life as fully charged with incident as that of Byron."* Lytton Strachey designs, and the care with which he opens and closes each essay is dramatic. He illustrates rather than explains.

Could anything be more novelistic than this extract from John Smith--Also Pocahontas by J. G. Fletcher: "The idyllic life in the woods which we left our hero pursuing in the last chapter did not long suffice to satisfy his restless temperament. Before the year was out, he was off again for the continent, this time engaged in a new adventure, among the Turks, who were ravaging Eastern Europe."** Smith's life reads like a story book. We are a bit conscious, perhaps, that we are getting an overdose of fiction; nevertheless, it is a good example in the extreme of the modern method. Imagination and color flavor its pages. Yet the fictionized biography is not more truly imaginative than the faithful biography provided that the biographer has been endowed with power to see the significance of events and lives and to interpret and make them real. Carlyle finds this one of the prime necessities of good biography.

In Biography he writes, "There is no need that the personages on the scene be a King or Clown: that the scene be the Forest of the Royal Oak 'on the borders of Staffordshire'; need only that the scene lie on this old firm Earth of ours, where we also have so surprisingly arrived; that the personages be men and seen with the eyes of a man." This reality he recognizes in Boswell's Life of Johnson of which he says in his essay on that book:--"That loose-flowing, careless-looking, Work of his is as a picture by one of Nature's own

*Maurois, A.; "Aspects of Biography"; D. Appleton & Co., 1929; p. 51
**Fletcher, J. J.; "John Smith--Also Pocahontas"; p. 14

Artists; the best possible resemblance of a Reality; like the very image thereof in a clear mirror, which ineed it was: let but the mirror be clear, this is the great point; the picture must and will be genuine. How the babbling Bozzy, inspired only by love, and the recognition and vision which love can lend, epitomizes nightly the words of Wisdon, its deeds and aspects."* This imaginative vision and important treatment of reality is in Sandbury's Abraham Lincoln.

The novel pictures people of imagination and the people are intelligible because the man is the creator of his character. Just so the fictionized biography endeavors to understand its subject so well that it describes its character as though it has created it. In this way an impression of reality is produced because the principal actors create the illusion that they are the characters in a novel. To the reader at times they seem almost too probable to be real. There is a certain depth to the characters; and dark passages are lighted up. It does us good to know the queens and kings were actual living persons who had colds andwho patronized certain mixture of brandy and port. The best biography impresses upon the mind of the reader the actual course of the lives of people who were human and who were influenced by human motives. It is vivid in presentation, and accurate in minutest detail. And the best biography never invents but it does try to recreate.

Biography can be termed a work of art simply because it is creative. The character is surrounded with lively, startling details to vivify it. Mr. Disraeli of the primrose interlude, or of the triumphant poppy-colored trousers and silky black curls, lives for us and diverts us. It is such tiny details as these that remain in our memory and impress us as no great deed he may have done. Realism is a characteristic of our age and we seek it everywhere. Any cut and dried portrait fails to register. The effect must be heightened; an

*Nitchie, E.; "Criticism of Literature"; Macmillan Company, 1928; p. 142

ethical neutrality and a reconstruction of nature by man must serve to produce something unique and attractive.

An extract from Maurois' Disraeli shows an intrinsic beauty which places biography in the realm of the artistic creations:

"They have canonized him as a saint!"

"No; Disraeli was very far from being a saint. But perhaps as some old Spirit of Spring, ever vanquished and ever alive, and as a symbol of what can be accomplished in a cold and hostile universe, by a long youthfulness of heart."*

It seems as though this brief paragraph has some deep and beautiful philosophy in it, and one likes to re-read it as some few lines of poetry. Disraeli had the right feeling about life and Maurois has created a lovely picture of him that is altogether human and inspiring.

Another recent biography that possesses style and effectiveness is Strachey's Elizabeth and Essex. The life of this queen has all the elements needed to arouse dramatic interest in her fate. She had the troubled youth so dear to fiction. She was early forced into a position of heavy responsibility. Being a woman as well as a queen, she had constantly to suffer from the interference of her private life with her public life and vice versa. In the terms of fiction, she had to choose between love and a career. For years after she had chosen, or had let events choose for her, she lived on among the consequences of those events. She lived tormentedly and magnificently, during great and painful times, in the face of adulation and scandalous abuse, with the greatness of power and the inner troublings of despair. All that distinguishes her from the heroine of a novel is that Elizabeth's circumstances were great and real. With such a subject Strachey has produced a masterly and brilliant account of his character and her time. He has caught the spirit of the Eliza-

*Maurois, A.; "Disraeli".

bethan age, and is almost lyrical in the way he has written. White-fire and enthusiasm, and irony so subtle and fine that we hardly realize it is there marks this book. It may last, and again, it may not. In order to make his portrait of the queen effective, Strachey has, perhaps, over-emphasized the character, but it does possess style, without a doubt. Furthermore, it is truly representative of the fashion of writing that has captivated the attention of readers and reviewers.

We should go back to Boswell's Johnson if we wish a superb piece of artistry. This book is great today. And what has make it so? Will Strachey's Elizabeth live as Boswell's Johnson? Boswell had the advantage of knowing, personally, his man. He particularly planned settings for Johnson in that he might see him in action and then write up the situations. He managed his subject by induction and was quick to perceive the effects. The most interesting parts, too, are the parts in which Boswell figured in closest relationship with his subject. We get a touch of Boswell's own personality. On the other hand, Johnson's fate depended on Boswell. Johnson's personality would not live today were it not for his apostle. Have we a "Boswell" among us today?

In Hilaire Belloc we have another satellite of the modern school. The summit of his prose excellence is Marie Antoinette--a moving, haunting tragedy, a gradual movement of beauty into despair. In this book we have three things: 1.--A story of one of the most thrilling periods in European history. 2.--A biography of a beautiful and self-willed queen. 3.--An attempt to tell history as a story, in the turning of the devices of the novel to the service of those two. These three elements are ably conceived in this portion that follows:

"When the iron outer door had shut and he knew the women and the children to be above, out of hearing, Louis (XVI) turned to his guards and gave this

order, that in spite of what he had said, the women should not be told in the morning of his departure, for that neither he nor they could suffer it.

"Then he went into the turret chamber where the priest was, and said: 'Let me address myself to the unique affair.'

"But above, from the room whose misery could just be heard, the Queen, when she had put her boy to bed and kissed him bitterly, threw herself upon her own bed all dressed, and throughout the darkness of the whole night long her daughter could hear her shuddering with cold and anguish.

"That night there was a murmur all around the Tower, for very many in Paris were watching, and through the drizzling mist there came, hour by hour, the distant rumble of cannon, and the sharp cries of command, and men marching by companies by the narrow Temple lane.

"It was very dark, barely six in the morning, when a guard from the King's room came up the stair. The Queen from above heard him coming. Her candle was lit--her fixed gaze expected him.-----He entered, but as he spoke her heart failed her; he had not come for the summons, he had but come for the King's book of prayer. She waited the full hour until seven struck in the steeples of the town, and the pale light began to grow: she waited past the moment of her husband's promise, till eight, till the full day--but no one came. Still she sat on, not knowing what might not have come between to delay their meeting; doors opened below, steps coming and going on the stairs, held all her mind. But no one sent for her, no one called her. It was nine when a more general movement made her half hope, half fear, the sound of the movement, which was the movement of many men, passed downward to the first stories, to the ground, and was lost. An emptiness fell upon the Tower Then she knew that her hope had departed.

order. Like in spite of what he had said, the women should not be told in the
reality of his decision, for that matter he not [illegible] quite it.

"Then he went into the upper room where the priest was, and said:

'Let me endeavor myself to [illegible] and be silent.'

"Not a word, even the men who [illegible] [illegible] just [illegible]. The [illegible]
[illegible] [illegible] to [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible]
[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

"For a moment there were voices in the courtyard, the tramp of many men upon the damp gravel, the creaking of the door, more distant steps in the garden, and the wheels of the coach far away at the outer porch. Then the confused noise of a following crowd dwindling westward till nothing remained but a complete silence in those populous streets, now deserted upon so great a public occasion.

"For yet another hour the silence endured--unbroken: Ten o'clock struck amid that silence; and the quarter--. The Queen heard through the shuttered window the curious and dreadful sound of a crowd that roars far off, and she knew that the thing had been done.

"Life returned into the streets beneath; the loud, shrill call of the news-men, crying the news accursedly, came much too shrill and too distinct against the walls. All day long, on to the early closing of the darkness, the mists gathered and lay thick over Paris and around her high abandoned place."*

To write such an account as this is, indeed, exquisite workmanship.

Belloc's latest biography, Richelieu, is a bit more intellectual, perhaps, than his Marie Antoinette. He seems to have become conscious that there is danger of over-doing things in adopting a purely narrative method. He has, though, excluded from his portrait of the Cardinal all that will not bring out in salient relief the points upon which he has decided to concentrate. But he takes a bold step when he attributes even to so dominating a genius as the great Richelieu the ability to deflect the very course of history.

Belloc has a faculty of painting effective word-pictures, and they are developed in such an artistic manner that the whole production is enriched by their excellence. His interest in history is fundamental, and he so makes use of his talents and knowledge as to intensify the period and his character.

*Belloc, H.; "Marie Antoinette";
Hyde, N. "Modern Biography"; Harcourt Brace & Co.; p. 254-6

Real learning is gleaned from such biography and it is satisfying in many ways. One is inspired to read further into subjects that concerned him but little before this introduction.

When a life appears against the background of a great period, the intellectual and spiritual curiosity of the reader finds solid satisfaction. He is inspired to slip from one life of a period to another as if he were looking into a brilliant, crowded room, now from this angle, now from that.

Such a reader, enchanted by Elizabeth and Essex turns to Francis Hackett's Henry the Eighth and finds himself racing along the track of that impassioned monogomist across the civilization into which Elizabeth was born. Lest the conversations with which the action of the book is enlivened should give the reader the notion that the author has been inventing dialogue, Hackett writes in a prefatory note, that "thanks to the astonishingly full diplomatic correspondence, I could stick to the record and yet quote direct speech."

By the time one has read these two books, he will have not only a knowledge of the times, but what is even more desirable, a personal interest in them. Having learned to think of history in terms of human life, he may be impelled to look into another period by a like procedure.

Longfellow has said that "art is the external expression of our thoughts."* Therefore, if biography is to be a work of art, the author is going to weave himself unconsciously into the life and times of his subject. We have seen how Boswell and Belloc have accomplished this. Strong in each of these books is the personality of the writer as well as that of the subject. Kinship, whether of blood or spirit, makes it possible for the heart to see farther than the head. Such imaginative vision of reality produces greater books than the pure "fictionized biography", such as Maurois' Ariel, or Barrington's Glorious Apollo, or Stewart's Immortal Lover, can ever be. The later are not

*Longfellow, H. W.; "An American Literature"; Pattee, The Century Co. p. 363

faithful to facts, nor are they actually creative writing.

Biography is a means of expression when the author has chosen his subject in order to respond to a secret need in his own nature. It will be written with more natural emotion than other kinds of biography, because the feelings and adventures of the hero will be the medium of the biographer's own feelings to a certain extent. But there are dangers in this type of biography. In his desire for self-expression, in his sympathy with, or antipathy to a character, the biographer runs the risk of unwittingly defacing historical truth.

To publish a biography, to announce it as a biography and not a novel, is to make an announcement of authentic facts, and the first thing that is due from a biographer to his reader is truth, as we have seen. He has no right to construct a hero according to his own needs and desires. He has no right to invent conversations and incidents. He has no right to omit certain facts because they do not fit in with his psychological structure. How many biographers of the new school remember these details when they give their work to the public? It is true that they are in the minority.

Individuality should appear in biography. An author, lacking in human sympathy and in psychological perception will not bring forth a work rich in human interest. It is this human interest element coupled with the personality of the author that colors and elevates a piece of work.

The modern biography tries to do for readers what Amy Lowell wrote in the preface of her life of Keats. "To make the reader feel as though he were living with Keats, subject to the same influences that surround him, moving in his circle, watching the advent of poems as from day to day they sprang into being."* Ludwig has also said, "My idea is to produce a work which will

Maurois, A.; "Aspects of Biography"; D. Appleton & Co.; p. 59.

[illegible] to death, for are their actions ever wholly rational.

Theory is a matter of correlation of the [illegible] observed phenomena in order to reason to a result from in his own mind. It will be written with very natural [illegible] their [illegible] of interpretation, [illegible] the tendencies and [illegible] of the [illegible] will be the [illegible] or the [illegible] of a [illegible] to a [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible] are [illegible] in [illegible] type of [illegible] [illegible]. In his desire for [illegible] [illegible], in his [illegible] [illegible], or anything to a [illegible], the biographer [illegible] the idea of [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible].

To [illegible] a [illegible], [illegible] is a [illegible] and not a [illegible] in to make a [illegible] [illegible] of [illegible] [illegible], the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

be strictly accordant with the available documentary evidence, but shall, none the less, bear the imprint of an imaginative recreation.

This comes easily to an artist who understands the determinisms that preside over human destinies great and small."* There is a bit of philosophy in his idea.

André Maurois give us this:

"When I read a short life of Shelley for the first time, I experienced a keen emotion. I will tell you why. I had just left the lycée and was full of philosophical and political ideas which possessed Shelley and his friend Hogg at the time of their arrival in London. Then, as circustances rather brusquely forced me into action, I found my ideas in conflict with my experience. I had wanted to apply to my emotional life those rational systems which I had formed in the abstract in the course of my study of the great philosophers; but on all sides I had encountered material things, alive and sensitive, and they would not accommodate themselves to my logical system. I had been the cause of suffering and I had suffered myself. I was at once irritated by my past youthfulness and indulgent towards it, since I knew that it could not have been otherwise. I longed to expose it, to pillory it, and to explain it at the same time. Well, Shelley had experienced such checks as seemed to me to be somewhat of the same nature as my own; of course, his life had had a hundred times more of grace and greatness than mine, but I knew that in the same circumstances and at the same age I should have made the same mistakes. The pride and certainty of youth were succeeded in me by a lively need of pity and here too I discovered traces of Shelley as he was towards the end, after the loss of his children. Yes, in very truth I felt that to tell the story of his life would be in some measure a deliverance for myself. My first

*Atlantic Monthly; "New Biography"; Ludwig, Maurois, Strachey"; by G. Joheston, March, 1929

to which) concerned with the availability homogenity evidence, but also from the lens, the [illegible] or immediate [illegible].

This order really is an article who understands the interpretation that pitched over human description great and small. There is a lot of [illegible] in his [illegible].

What the role give to [illegible]:

When I was a short life of [illegible] for the first time, I [illegible] a long [illegible]. I will [illegible]. I had just left the [illegible] and was [illegible] of [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] possessed [illegible] and his [illegible] [illegible] at the [illegible] of their [illegible] in London. [illegible] as [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] to [illegible]. I [illegible] my [illegible] in [illegible] with my [illegible]. I [illegible] to [illegible] to my [illegible] life [illegible] [illegible] which I had formed in the [illegible] in the course of my [illegible] of the [illegible] [illegible] but on all [illegible] I had [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] to my logical [illegible]. I was [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] and I had [illegible] [illegible]. I was at [illegible] [illegible] by a [illegible] [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] it, since I [illegible] that it could not have been [illegible]. I longed to [illegible] it, to [illegible] it, [illegible] to [illegible] it at the same time. [illegible] had [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] to be [illegible] of the same [illegible] as my own; of course, [illegible] had [illegible] [illegible] more of [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible]. But I [illegible] in the [illegible] circumstances and at the same age I should have [illegible] the same [illegible]. The [illegible] and [illegible] of [illegible] were [illegible] in a [illegible] [illegible] of [illegible] and [illegible] I discovered [illegible] of [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] after the loss of his [illegible]. [illegible], in [illegible] I [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] of his life [illegible] in [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible]. My first [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

idea was to try to make a novel out of the life, to place the story of Shelley and Harriet and Mary in a modern setting. I actually wrote the novel; but it was not a good novel and my Shelley continued to torment me. Gradually I read everything that had been written about him, all his letters, all letters written by his friends, and at last I took the plunge. Was I right? I don't know. I don't think so. I don't like the book any longer. In my eyes it is spoilt by an ironic tone which came from the fact that the irony was aimed by myself at myself. I wanted to kill the romantic in me; and, in order to do it, I scoffed at it in Shelley, but I loved it while I scoffed. Good or bad, the book was written with pleasure, even with passion; and now I think you will begin to realize what I understand by biography considered as a means of expression."*

Such an idea as Maurois holds is far afield from the thoughts of a Victorian biographer. The Victorian was dominated by the idea of goodness. Noble, upright, chaste, and severe; it is thus that the Victorian worthies are presented to us. The figure is almost always above life-size in top-hat and frock-coat, and the manner of presentation becomes increasingly clumsy and laborious. "The 'Homo Biographicus' that the Victorian presents is always in action; he talks very little with his fellows, and never thinks when he is alone; he writes letters and keeps a diary; and worst of all, he is treated severely by his biographer."** Does he really deserve such an interpretation?

"Biography can really be a beautiful piece of workmanship, and not deviate from truth or facts, either. It can show us, side by side with the tragic events of a life, the calm and oblivion which follows; it can show us, side by side with great ambitions, the vanity of their realizations; and it may also bring peace to our souls. There is at once great beauty and tranquillity in the picture of Ruskin in his old age sitting by his window, looking vaguely

*Maurois, A.; "Aspects of Biography"; Appleton & Co., 1929, p. 120-21
**Paraphrased from Maurois, A. "Aspects of Biography"; p. 200

at the clouds and murmuring 'Beautiful--beautiful'--. A biographer, such as Strachey, who has the power to diffuse through his records of facts the poetic idea of Destiny, of passage of Time, and of fragility of human fortune, brings comfort in his wake."*

The very real pleasure which the intelligent reader today derives from biography proceeds, in general, from no very active energy of thought; his responses are stirred by languid processes of identification and comparison. He identifies himself with certain characters in a biography, and he compares his own feelings and experiences with theirs. It brings with it comfort; it enlarges sympathy; it expels selfishness, and it quickens aspiration. "After reading the life of Beethoven, or of Ruskin, or of Goethe, we do not, of course, feel ourselves to be on a level with them, but we realize that in every human sould there is an element which understands and approves their noblest aspirations."**

New biography, in contrast with Victorian biography, is not only instructive, but amusing; its story is complex, and curious. The people are no mere marionettes, but real human beings with an enduring humanity. The point of view is as that from an airplane: the main features are seen, yet there is a unified whole. And finally the personality of the writer colors his subject.

DESTRUCTIVE ELEMENTS IN MODERN BIOGRAPHY

It cannot be questioned that the "fictionized biography" has worked harm to true biography. The desire for realism and "atmosphere" in a cynical age has led authors of biography to produce a sensational type of inventive-biography which lays no claim to greatness or honesty. In the first place, the author constructs scenes and invents dialogue, stirring it together with par-

*Maurois, A.; "Aspects of Biography"; D. Appleton Co., 1929; p. 142
**Maurois, A.; "Aspects of Biography"; D. Appleton Co., 1929; p. 135

at the crowds and surrounding [illegible]--the [illegible]. A [illegible], such as Dracula, are the power to distinguish records of facts [illegible] time of [illegible], of [illegible] of [illegible], and of [illegible] of [illegible] for [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] in his [illegible].

The [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible] reader to [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], in [illegible], from [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] are [illegible] by [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

tial authenticity until the reader or reviewer, unless he has had access to sources and is sufficiently familiar with fundamental material, finds himself in a maze of fact and fiction, and bewildering unable to sift one from the other. This kind of work is generally pernicious. At times, however, there may be an occasional excuse for this sort of thing. For example, Ludwig, seeking frankly for truths even at the cost of facts in some of his biographies of figures already perfectly and adequately limned by his predecessors, makes use of this method.

Not only are scenes and dialogue invented but the biographer, weary of research, or tantalized by the insufficiency of his data, can seem to accomplish much by "supposing" that his subject felt thus and thus upon a certain occasion. He puts thoughts in the mind of his character in order to enliven the biography. What can he know of the thoughts and innermost emotions of a man who has been dead for years? An author has to be extremely clever to deduct such information, and he is able, only after long research, involved and intricate, to do this effectively. This tendency becomes so dominant at times that the honest reader is irritated by the imagination of such a biographer.

Simply for the sake of effect an author oftentimes emphasizes and dwells on the eccentricities of a character. It was not Alexander Pope's deformity that made him a great man in literature; nor was it Elizabeth's idiosyncrasies that made her one of England's greatest queens. Yet to attract the audience to history and to make it entertaining as well, Strachey ironically portrays his subject, and the reader has a picture of a masterful, dominating, eccentric oldwoman, who had distorted sex life, and who wore an immense red wig. To satirize and burlesque serious personalities in history--Benjamin Frank-

lin has suffered from this during the past years--in trying to give an unconvential picture, seems utter falsification.

Then, to write a life of a great man with no mention of his work, is absolutely wrong. A man's work is his life. In a recent Life of Longfellow no mention was made of his poetrywhatsoever, although his life history was well written. The man was great, but such a biography could never be great because it failed in attributing to Longfellow the reason for, and the material that, made for greatness.

Making use of dramatic episodes, of continual clashes, and tragic climaxes, such as Dakin in his life of Mrs. Eddy has employed, is merely producing a sensational piece of work, blatant in its presentation.

Above all else, the picturesqueness of scandal highly colors many biographies of today. The public seems to take delight in such bits of information that tend to tear down the man from his pedestal and puts him below the pale. This is the most harmful element in the modern biography. But authors, in their endeavor to put out a salable book, and realizing the appetite of the public for sensuous reading material, are making haste to accommodate the chronic propensity of the multitude for the dramatic and the scandalous. From pulling down idols, they have taken to setting up criminals for inspection. To be the subject of a memoir today it seems no longer necessary to have played a part in history, to have been great, or worthy, or typical of a period. One needs only to have wrought havoc with manners or morals to be put into print. Our book-stalls are cluttered with biographies of persons whom we have never even heard of. Wild or gallant ladies in crime or debauchery collectively have a place in the history of civilization; but as for deserving the dignity of an individual biography, they scarce merit even the thought. Yet they are

being chronicled with the fulness of detail that leaves nothing of sin to the imagination; and an undiscriminating public and critics whose cult is open-mindedness, proclaim the growing trend toward the revamping of such personalities as evidence of historical curiosity. History, indeed! All they are looking for is the scandal and the smutty bits in such lives. They, who know a choice morsel of gossip today, like to say that times now are no worse than they were then. A common "dernier ressort."

But let us not assume that this element in biography is a new thing. No new biography is more frank in revealing the secret sins of its subject than was the Lives of the Caesars by Suetonius. The Autobiography of St. Augustine, in which he recounts, among other things, his abnormal sexual longings and practices with an openness that only a hardened "new biographer" would compete with, is startling as one could wish. The only thing new in biography is method. New methods of selection and emphasis in writing lives are chosen to coordinate with the tastes of the public. Will Durant's Transition is as different in style from St. Augustine's Autobiography as the two generations themselves, but they are alike in effects produced for the generations for which they were produced.

Our entire attitude today is to try to judge men of the past by standards of the present. Of course, standards in the past were different from those of the present. Today it is scandalous for a man to have more than one wife. In Biblical times a man could have as many wives as he desired and was esteemed no less for the fact. This "debunking" biography we have today selects for the most exciting part of a hero's career that part in which he departs from the accepted "mores." But could there possibly be a cheaper or more absurd standard by which to value a man's life? The accepted "mores" change from time to

time. In the reign of Charles the Second, customs were one things, in the reign of Queen Victoria they were another, and in the reign of Herbert Hoover it is still different. Is the serious biographer whose aim is to transmit personality to be governed in his selection of facts by counting as most exciting or important those which illustrate the points in which his subject departs from the accepted customs of his moment--or our moment? The current biographers extort the picture so much be dwelling on points in which the heroes of the past departed from the "mores" of the present. In Russell's Benjamin Franklin, five pages are given over to the relating of a smutty skit. Franklin was a great man in his day, a moral, upright, esteemed citizen. Why judge him by the standards of today when to his generation he was regarded with the greatest respect? Oftentimes our modern biography is simply unphilosophical, unpsychological, and technically poor. With the main idea of producing a sensational novel, authors have produced many worthless biographies that have flooded the market; but, thanks to an increasingly critical and intellectual public, they are being so ruthlessly dissipated that, it is safe to say, they are on the downward trend.

It is the iconoclastic tendency in biography that has wrought the deepest concern among discriminating critics. More than one famous man has had his legend overhauled in the past few years, in the course of a new biography. The danger in such revaluation, drastic because of the pitfalls, is that in the process the permanent values of the life may become obscured for the reader who begins with the newer work. If, in the reappraisal of a figure, that figure shrinks, we have a disillusioning and shocking conception of one whom we have admired. A reappraisal should be a dignified, scholarly affair with sound sense prompting every chapter. In the operation some unconsciously

break down their idols, and unintentionally produce a piece of work which can be interpreted by the public as a "debunking" biography. Other authors seem to have had an antipathy toward their subject and deliberately proceed to bring to light the weaknesses, errors, and self-indulgences of those reputed to be great. These would-be-writers appear to think no history is complete that does not portray such individuals.

This idol-smashing is typical of the age through which we are now passing. The mad rushing from one place to another, from one thing to another, the breaking down of all restraints, the unlimited freedom in all walks of life, the general lessening of control, the morale, the openness of spirit and frankness of speech, the nonchalance and indifference, the desire for excitement and extravagant living, and the destruction of the finer things in life--all these things characterize a sort of pagan cult which is thought by many to have few, if any, redeeming features. A biography which is bent upon destroying a hero whose noble example has sustained and uplifted the human race for years, is a piece of work that deserves nothing but contempt.

In what purports to be a complete biography of Franklin, scarcely to mention his elaborate plan for a union of the Colonies yet devoting pages to his sensuous passions, is to paint as wholly false a picture of a man as to pretend that he was an asexual saint. In this type of biography material is evidently selected solely with the view of picking the last vestige of greatness off all humanity, past as well as present, when selection is not simply paragraphic. Many of these biographies are comparable to the tourist who found himself on the ground floor room of a hotel in a mining camp with no curtain. Having hung up his undershirt to afford some shelter from prying eyes, he soon found it drawn aside as a man looked in. When the intruder

was asked what his business was, he answered, "I jest wanted to see what was going on in here that was so damned private." And people read many of such biographies, not from interest in the subject himself, but simply to swell their own colossal egotism. They want to look below the surface, see something degrading or a bit improper. The more hidden or more glazed the appearance, the deeper the desire of discovery. And it is a mere effort on the part of the author to belittle under the guise of "humanizing" his subject. He displays on an improper scale the weaknesses of admirable men.

Stewart, depicting Robert Burns, has done this very thing. He has created a picturesque novel, very touching and impassioned. Burns' love-affairs bulk large and his sensuous nature is heightened. The reader observes a man whom he has always admired for his beautiful verse, going about populating the country-side. If previous to the reading of this novel, one had respect and admiration for this Scottish poet, all appreciation of the man himself is overpowered by this sensational exposition of his passions. Stewart does, however, depict his sweet and lovable nature and to one not seeking the smutty side of the poet's nature he sees in him "a man for a' that."

An anecdote of John Fox, Jr. is descriptive of some biographies. When he read some of his stories about the mountain whites to them, themselves, a voice shouted, "If he's tellin' the truth he ain't no gentleman, and if he ain't, then, by God, he's a liar."

A life of Hawthorne by Lloyd Morris is inadequate from the standpoint that he is depicted as a bungling, ill-placed, and unhappy man to whom a biographer may presume to speak condescendingly as "Nathaniel." One would hardly gather from this book that Hawthorne was our greatest imaginative genius and the author of immortal romances. The author deems himself so superior to his

subject that he can do nothing more than to portray a figure of note, with utter lack of appreciation. Thoreau has also suffered from the proper appreciative perspective. And here in the United States the two greatest Americans have been made the targets of suspicions, innuendoes, and downright falsehoods, in the effort to relieve the writers from unwelcome admission of cordial admiration for and love of greatest figures in History.

Abraham Lincoln, though a descendant of respectable ancestors in England, Massachusetts, and Virginia, was born on the frontier and brought up in what the new lights of biography seem to think a deplorable condition of poverty, ignorance, and degradation. The most recent investigations bring out clearly that the Lincoln family at Hodgdonville, when and after Abraham was born, were on the same social footing as their neighbors, had as good a house, as good furniture, as good horses, and as good firearms as other people about them. There was even an anti-slavery church in the neighborhood in which it was possible that young Abraham obtained some ideas as to the evils of slavery years before his experience on the flatboat going down the Mississippi. There is no lack of excellent, lively, and readable biographies of Abraham Lincoln by competent scholars. Yet, when a magazine prints a set of silly, unreal, and visibly forged letters relating to Lincoln, which, while not imputing wrong doing to him, makes him out a poor, unsteady, and unreasoning young man, the story is repeated all over the country.

The school of belittling biographies busied itself especially with George Washington. It is true that Weems--whose historical romance might well have been entitled "What Weems Wanted Washington to Have Been"--and his imitating and adoring writers have helped to convince the historically minded that no man could be as great as Washington has been depicted. Three or four books

have recently been published with the apparent purpose of making people believe that Washington was first a weakling boy, then a libertine, later a military failure, successful only because even poor soldiers were set in command against him, and at last a discredible statesman, cringing in fear of a Philadelphia mob.

Nobody can ascertain the history of every moment in a young man's life or in an old man's life. We have, however, more evidence as to where Washington was from day to day, where he went, whom he met, and what he did, than in the case of any man of mark in his period. The Diaries never tell what Washington was thinking about or planning or what he read or how it affected his mind. They tell us, nearly two hundred years afterward, where he was and whom he met, revealing to us his occupations, his avocations, his interests, his amusements, his friends. Besides that record, literally thousands of his personal letters are extant. No man of his time, and few prominent men of any time, lived such an open life. There is no proof that he was a bad character anywhere, but every now and then some of the barnyard school of biographers revive ancient and exploded scandals, found in forgeries concocted by personal enemies during the Revolution, to brand him with a dissolute life.

In manyways a very cool and cautious man, Washington never hesitated to express his mind with vigor and decision. Hence it takes something more than a carefully constructed house of cards, in which dwells Sally Fairfax, to convict him of a deception of one of his most intimate men friends, renewed at intervals for fifteen years. The genuine leaders of the modern vivid biographical school have found no need of such repeated and clumsy efforts to construct an unprovable background for their generalizations.

The best antidote to these artificial efforts to tear down characters like

Lincoln and Washington is to read their own writings. The two volumes of Lincoln's Works, published years ago, are a storehouse of his wisdon and an arsenal for those who love his memory. Just so with Washington. His diary is curt and factual, but it brings out the many-sidedness of his abilities and his character. One wonders that the "Modern Historical School for Scandal" has not attacked the reputation of Theodore Roosevelt, another of those unaccountables who have achieved greatness by sticking to great jobs. Perhaps a hundred years hence some American will try to produce the impression that he wasted his life in riotous living, presenting as evidence his pillow fights with his children and their young friends. History is very much more than facts and very much more than the public incidents in the life of great men; but you cannot make history out of barber-shop gossip.*

We find all types of biography today. Maurois claims that the "debunking" method represents a reaction, and reactions tend to go too far. At present the disciples are many but a few notorious examples of biographic mud-slinging seem to have disgusted the public rather than stimulated the desire for more. It appears no longer profitable to carry this to the extreme. However, it is not until the mass mind alters that biographywill alter. A period interested in what goes on in the bathroom will find biographers willing to pry there for them.

There is small wonder, in the light of these facts, that some men fear biographers as they do critics. Browning, David Loth tells us, went to a good deal of pains to collect letters he had written to old friends. He destroyed as many as he could get his hands on, retaining only the sacred correspondence with "Ba". These he knew should belong to the world, for he had given them to his son "Pen" with the comment:

*Hart, A. B.; "The Modern Historical School for Scandal"; Current History, February, 1930, p. 969-70

"Do as you please with them when I am gone."

He refused to supply even close friends with biographical material when they wished to capitalize his fame with a "Life and Letters." Such books, he said, were shameless invasions of privacy. No man should be thus exposed until he was decently dead, and not even then.

As the result of publishing a recent biography of Gladstone which was most intimate and revealing, the author was severely prosecuted by the lineage. The unsympathetic attitude toward his subject is entirely out of keeping with such type of work. It seems as though the majority of biographers select a subject, "read up" on him, size him up in keeping with their own belief, some of which is not infrequently delusional, and one can hardly blame the descendants from taking drastic measures when the matter has progressed beyond the bounds of reason and decency.

The unsympathetic and non-conditional measure has resulted in even different ways. To produce a salable book is the prime issue, at the cost of facts and reputation. In one case a biographer was sent for by a publishing house. He was given so many months to write a life of So-and-so. The biographer remarked that he did not know a thing about the subject. He was told he would be given a list of what to read, a check for $5,000. was passed, and in due course of time, the "true" life came out. Now if this is not blasphemous nothing ever was! The desire to be dramatic, to insert flashy details, and to be romantic often ends by the biographer merely falling upon that which is arresting only because it is shocking and ugly. When amazing details cannot be found to startle the reader, they are promptly invented. It seems, in some cases the material is chosen for the sake of indelicacy. This close relationship between biography and fiction and drama has led us into the study and reading of

life-history with a critical turn of mind. We find ourselves trying to extract truth from fiction continually.

At present, in both fiction and biography, the sex element is all-absorbing. All phases of it are universally discussed and analyzed. Anabel Ellis-Williams, in her life of Ruskin, makes a point of disclosing her subject's sex complex, and endeavors to reinterpret many of his actions in accordance with the Freudian theory. Does it help us to appreciate Wagner or Goethe any more to learn that they exchanged wives? Because Shelley adopted the "companionate marriage" theory we have a slightly different attitude toward Shelley the man and Shelley the poet. But the irregularity of his life, his attitude toward society and convention, makes him no less true to his ideals and to himself. That he lived a disordered life, that he was highly emotional--perhaps that was enough to have known about him. We would rather think of him in terms of the beautiful lyrics he gave to the world than from the picture Maurois displays. Shelley did think of women as aethereal, and this is more than we can say of Byron who had a great contempt for womanhood and never asked from his numerous mistresses any intellectual companionship. Byron's life of debauchery was too frankly revealed.

It is the love of the sensuous episode for the episode's sake that damns so many current biographies and distorts the subject into a mere resemblance of the original. In the earlier lives of Franklin one gets the impression that he was a great philosopher. In the latest biographies we have a ribald and obscene-minded old roisterer. When such episodes in a man's life exist, the real biographer should consider whether the facts had any real and lasting influence on the man himself, his career, and personality. Suppose, for example, a subject had had a single episode when nineteen, married shortly afterward, and lived happily. Suppose, again, a man in later life had a

had a liaison lasting years which affected his whole life and work. Here, it is significant; in the first case, it was not. The test should not be the emotional interest of the episode but the importance of it as one of the items selected by which the biographer is trying to build up a picture of idiosyncratic personality.

As long as we have a large class that is literate without any standards we shall have biography written that is neither art, science, nor literature. Fears have been expressed that the taste for biography that really attains to high standards of scholarship, may be vitiated by all the "easy reading" lives with which the shops are filled. It is the duty of critics, then, to say the truth about books as they appear; to distinguish clearly for the reader between the genuine science, in the sense of exact knowledge, of a book like Beveridge's Lincoln, and the pseudo-scientific bolder dash of, for example, most of the psychoanalytic school; to distinguish between scholarly presentation of facts, and the personal interpretation of states of mind, even when the later have the charms and style of Strachey. The trend would then be veracious rather than vivacious, and pictorial rather than picturesque.

The Victorian biographers were vastly different from the modern biographers when it came to discussing the vices of their subjects. Frankness found no place among the Victorians. Their aim was to erect a commemorative monument to so great a man, setting forth his life so as we might imitate his virtues. Since many biographies were written by request--we recall that Queen Victoria had such a biography written of her dear Prince Albert--the writers chosen were those who could give suitable praise to the deceased. Consequently the hero's public mask was presented; notorious scandals were barely mentioned; the intimate life, weaknesses, and mistakes played no part in the chronicle. The result was that

the biographies were so stuffed with virtue that we began to doubt the existence of any virtue.

Today, there has been a tendency to carry this element just as far in the opposite direction. We find that men of the past were not so great as once we thought them; we find that men who in other generations were obscure and forgotten, and if ever mentioned, then only to be sneered at, suddenly assume a larger statue than we ever thought they possibly could. We find that in the effort to be truthful, the modern biographers have over-stepped the bounds of decency and reserve and have stripped every vesture of glory from some illustrious individuals. The influence of Freud has produced character analysis in terms of complexes, and the sex element bulks large. The chief aim of some biographers seems to have been to put on the market a sensational novel in spite of the damage done to character and reputation.

A bad modern biography is a book of spurious fame animated by a would-be ironic spirit which is merely cruel and shallow. Such a book is so free in the treatment of facts that it has completely failed to find the true ruling passions and spiritual tendencies prompting the actions.

The test of a real biography is individuality, which divides it from history, and absolute truth, which divides it from fiction.

SUMMARY

Within the past few years there has been an increasing interest in the reading and writing of biography. Today it is as popular as fiction. What has been the cause of this new impetus given to life-histories? For the most part it has been due to the manner and style in which these books are written, for they so closely resemble fiction that interest and enthusiasm have assumed new proportions. Then, too, there are biographies written for the public, to appease their curiosity and stimulate their thoughts and emotions. Some biographers, catering to a sensation-loving public, have played havoc among the lives and reputations of many illustrious beings. Other biographers, writing for an intellectual public, have produced some very fine pieces of work, bespeaking real scientific and creative knowledge of their craft.

Since the "proper study of mankind is man himself" it is not surprising that there should be a universal interest and appeal in biography. Biography, itself is not a new art. Its history can be traced back to the very beginning of literature. We find delightful biographical portraitures in the Old Testament, and the life story of Jesus in the New Testament is most absorbing. The Iliad and the Odyssey are really biography. Plutarch's Lives, perhaps, is the most noteworthy of the early biographies. Plutarch treats of his heroes in pairs and intersperses little personal touches here and there. In the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, we find biographies of kings and statesman, but the second great name is that of Benuenuto Cellini. He wrote an Autobiography which is a wonderful creation of sixteenth century life in Italy. He reveals the personality of the subject and so presents a true picture. Samuel Pepys' Diary was the next bit of important writing of this type. Its

quaint type and unconscious humor gained it its popularity. In 1791 perhaps the best biography ever written appeared. This was Boswell's Life of Johnson. It is, perhaps, a model by which many authors write. In the same year Benjamin Franklin's Autobiography was written, and America contributed to the history of the art. With Boswell's Johnson we connect Lockhart's Life of Sir Walter Scott and Trvelyan's Life and Letters of Macaulay an enduring trilogy. Then there were the Victorian biographers, dull, pedantic, virtuous, uninteresting, who produced works equally unstimulating. Today, we have a new school. Lytton Strachey has revolutionized the art, as it were, and we have a new type of biography vastly different from anything produced previously.

The aim of biography should be to present a truthful personality. A good biographer, in order to accomplish this, should be a man of wide sympathies, and should have a close acquaintance with his hero. He should so saturate himself in the material at hand about both his subject and the period in which he lived that he can lay before us a personage as he appeared to him contemporaries, to himself, and to those among whom he lived, and acted, and enjoyed, and suffered An ideal biographer knows he should possess intellectual honesty to achieve his task.

From the standpoint of the reader biography is the most profitable type of reading. It gives reality, stirs ambitions, and leads to other branches of learning.

One has only to read a page of Plutarch's Lives or a Victorian biographer like Trevelyan, and read after this a page of Lytton Strachey's Queen Victoria or André Maurois's Ariel to realize that there is such a thing as modern biography. A different point of view is presented, and the author has an imaginative insight, as it were, in our modern biographies. A book written with integrity by

an honest writer, possessing a depth of understanding, and recreated in an artistic manner is what constitutes the book of the modern school. Lytton Strachey, the parent of modern biography, realized that in order for his book to be read in such an age as we are now passing through, interest had to be the fundamental element. He succeeded so well in his attempt that there sprang into being almost overnight a group of biographers who attempted to make lives read like stories.

Biography, first of all, demands truth, and truth demands individuals, not types. It is the person that is the centre of interest, and the biographer must not only steep himself in all available material, but he must have the ability of selecting the essential factors in that life that will most truthfully portray his subject's personality. The temptation to be clever, to produce something spectacular, to enlarge upon some traits of his character that the sensation-loving public delight in exploring, would be far from truthful, for a wrong conception of the character would be portrayed. Therefore truth in the selection of details is paramount. A certain breadth and depth of judgement is required, and a mind free from any preconceived notions or lust for propaganda. Above all, discretion should be employed in the selection.

The Victorian biographies were but a collection of dates and movements strung together, and had no ultimate value than that of a source book. They were extremely dull in comparison to our modern biographer who so manipulates facts that vivid, alive and distinctively individualistic characters are portrayed. Truth runs through both biographies, but where the Victorians literally stuffed their books with truth, the moderns have sorted, polished, shaded, and chosen their truths in such a manner as to bring to the foreground the personality

of the subject and the spirit of the times. In other words, they have interpreted and explained, and recreated their subject in terms of the truths.

One cannot go very far these days in analyzing character without invading the sphere of psychology. By analyzing the qualities that make up the character of the subject, the reader comes to know the subject as he comes to know a person whom he meets in his daily life. Biographers today are giving us the thoughts of the subject, and they are accomplishing this by intellectual recreation after minute analysis. A more conclusive picture of the subject is gained, thereby, and a knowledge and understanding of how and why he accomplished or tried to accomplish certain things, together with the inherent nature of the subject himself is attained. Modern biography also recognizes another method of presentation, and that is by gradual exposition of a personality developing through a long series of events. This is resorted to at times because the author is not always able to detect character through psychoanalysis.

The Victorian biographers produced merely factual books, and their characters appeared more like stuffed figures than real, actual, full-blooded persons. As a result of psychology, we have characters who think, who do things with a purpose, and who are vital beings.

There was a time when fiction and biography was one. Much of our early literature was life-history. The affiliation between the two is marked but more so today than ever before. We have what is popularly known as "fictionized biography." This has worked both good and evil to biography but let us first view the good points.

A novel is a work of art. Why not a biography? It is surely art to be able to portray a picture of Byron, for example, as he was in Shelley's eyes at the time Shelley knew him. It is art to be able to bring one character to

the foreground without sublimating other characters with whom he was closely connected. It is art to be able to indite an element of suspense in a thing like a biography when every reader knows that the subject will become a great leader or a great poet, and in the end die. It is art to be able to trace the intellectual development of the character. It is the humanistic element in biographies today that tend to make them a piece of literature. It is art to put an emphasis on design and strive for organic unity in which each episode and incident is an essential contribution to the whole. It is art to describe a character as though the author was the creator. This requires imaginative insight and an impression of reality is assumed by this delicate interpretation. Biography can be termed a work of art simply because it is creative. It satisfies the intellectual curiosity in an artistic manner and inspires one to read further into subjects that were of little concern to him previously. Furthermore, if biography is to be a work of art, the author is going to weave himself unconsciously into the life and times of his subject. The biography will be written with a natural emotion which can not help but reach the heart of the reader.

The idea that biography can be creative is far afield from the conception the Victorians held. The figures they presented were noble, upright, chaste, and severe; they were always in action, they talked very little, and never thought or pondered over matters when alone. They were models of propriety and their biographies were written mainly with a moralistic value in view. Modern biographers produce books that are not only instructive, but amusing, curious, and complex. The people are no mere puppets, but real human beings with thoughts and feelings. They are conceived in such an artistic manner that we read of their exploits with the zest with which we read a work of fiction.

Let us now consider the destructive elements wrought in biography from undue fictionization. The desire for realism and "atmosphere" has led to a sensational type of inventive-biography that lays no claim to art, greatness, or honesty. The author has been induced to construct scenes and invent dialogue, stirring it together with partial authenticity, until the reader cannot extract fact from fiction. Furthermore, he vivifies his work by the emotions and eccentricities of his subject simply for the sake of effect. Often times, no mention of the man's work is made at all, and this is absolutely wrong, because it was on account of his work that he was great. Man's life is his work in many cases. Making use of dramatic episodes, continual clashes, and tragic climaxes, is merely producing a piece of work that reeks with efficacy and has no ultimate value in the realm of real literature. Above all else, the picturesqueness of scandal highly colors many biographies. This "debunking" biography selects that portion in the subjects career where he departed from the accepted customs and judges him by that standard. A biographer of this type dwells on points in which the heroes of the past departed from the "mores" of the present, forgetting that standards change from generation to generation. Many a man has had his reputation and legend overhawled in the process of revaluation. This iconoclastic tendency in prsent day biography is no doubt, the most harmful element. A biography which is bent upon destroying a hero whose noble example has sustained and uplifted the human race for years, is a book that deserves no place on our book-shelves. George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Benjamin Franklin have suffered from such blasted attempts to reveal the "real" man. The desire to be dramatic, to insert flashy details, and to be romantic has resulted in producing something shocking and ugly. The critical attitude rather than the sympathetic has wrought havoc among biographies. The sex-

element bulks large and all phases of it are presented in modern biographies. Perhaps the influence of Freud and his theories have influenced biographies to a disadvantage; at any rate, we get entirely different conceptions of illustrious and respected individuals distorted by sensuous episodes. Many biographers do not take time to consider whether the facts had any real and lasting influence on the subject himself, his career, and personality. They display the episodes for the episode's sake and thereby destroy something fine in that man's make-up. But as long as we have a public that want such displays, there will always be biographies to give them what they want.

The Victorian biographers never thought to discuss the vices of their subjects. Frankness found no place among their works. They had not the power of judging whether a man's life was affected by his irregularities. Their subjects were noble, great, and virtuous. If any episode did not bespeak purity, it was promptly covered up. They were models of propriety.

Today the tendency has been to carry this as far in the opposite direction. We find men of the past were not so great as we once thought them. We find that in the endeavor to be truthful, the modern biographers have overstepped the bounds of decency and reserve. The influence of Freud has produced character analysis and complexes, and the sex element is overdone. Some biographers seem to have desired nothing more than to put a sensational novel on the market in spite of the damage to someone's character and reputation.

The test of a real biography is individuality, which divides it from history, and absolute truth, which divides it from fiction.

It would be fitting, perhaps, to make a general appraisal of the biographies incorporated in this piece of work. Opinions are formed, of course, according to what one seeks in biography, and to the measure in which one finds it. To me, Lytton Strachey's Queen Victoria is a biography of enduring qualities. Were I to place an estimate on this book, I would rank it above Ludwig's or Maurois's works, although Maurois's new biography, Byron, has the promise of a brilliant future. Ariel is a delightful love story, and Disraeli presents a beautiful picture. In reading Katherine Anthony's Queen Elizabeth, Lewis Browne's That Man Heine, Francis Hackett's Henry the Eighth, David Loth's The Brownings or Cameron Roger's Cyrano, one has the feeling of making the acquaintance with the author's subjects rather than the intimate sense of living with and sharing the life. The superiority of these books, however, is appreciated after reading the highly fictionized biographies The Immortal Lover by John Stewart and This Side Idolatry by C. B. Roberts. Fact and fiction are so highly interfused that it is difficult, at times, to distinguish between the two. Yet this biography serves a purpose, for it is a stepping stone to better and more trustworthy biographies. One is attracted by the story element of a human life, and such works as these will in time be replaced by a type of biography the intelligent public demands. It is safe to say that biography, as it is written today, has reached a high place, and although there are many biographies of no real value, the trend that it has taken promises a future of meritorious character.